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AGILENT TECHNOLOGIES
Legal Department, 51U-PD
Intellectual Property Administration
P.O. Box 58043
Santa Clara CA 95052-8043

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MAY 19 2003

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of
Holcombe
Application No. 09/764,972
Filed: January 18, 2001
Attorney Docket No. 10004174-1
FOR: METHOD FOR CONSTRUCTING A
FLEX-RIGID LAMINATE PROBE

DECISION DISMISSING
PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed April 28, 2003 (certificate of mailing date April 21, 2003), to revive the above-identified application.

The petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) is **DISMISSED**.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Petition under 37 CFR 1.137." This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to timely reply to the Restriction Requirement, mailed August 27, 2002, which set an extendable period for reply of one (1) month. Having obtained no extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a), this application became abandoned on September 28, 2002 for failing to reply. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on March 12, 2003.

The application file does not indicate a change of address has been filed in this case, although the address given on the petition differs from the address of record. A change of address should be filed in this case in accordance with MPEP 601.03. A courtesy copy of this decision is being mailed to the address noted on the petition. However, until otherwise instructed, all future correspondence regarding this application will be mailed solely to the address of record.

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by (1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application

abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof; (2) the petition fee as set forth in § 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in § 1.20 (d)) required pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section. This petition does not satisfy requirement (3).

With respect to (3), the showing of record is inadequate to establish unavoidable delay within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a). Specifically, an application is "unavoidably" abandoned only where petitioner, or counsel for petitioner, takes all action necessary for a proper response to the outstanding Office action, but through the intervention of unforeseen circumstances, such as failure of mail, telegraph, telefacsimile, or the negligence of otherwise reliable employees, the response is not timely received in the Office. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31 (Comm'r Pat. 1887).

The Commissioner may revive an abandoned application if the delay in responding to the relevant outstanding Office requirement is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable". 35 USC § 133. Decisions on reviving abandoned applications have adopted the reasonably prudent person standard in determining if the delay was unavoidable. Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (Comm'r Pat. 1887) (the term 'unavoidable' "is applicable to ordinary human affairs, and requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business"); In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (D.C. Cir. 1912); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (Comm'r Pat. 1913). In addition, decisions on revival are made on a "case-by-case basis, taking all the facts and circumstances into account." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982). Finally, a petition to revive an application as unavoidably abandoned cannot be granted where a petitioner has failed to meet his or her burden of establishing the cause of the unavoidable delay. Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987).

Petitioner states that "the reply to the Restriction Requirement was overlooked due to the Divisional being filed. This was an administrative error."

Administrative error may be a basis for finding unavoidable delay, however petitioner has not provided adequate support to prove administrative error.

Petitioner has not explained how in-coming correspondence from the Office is processed, by whom it is processed, how due dates are docketed, and by whom they are docketed. Petitioner must supply information regarding the training provided to the personnel responsible for the docketing, degree of supervision of their work, and checks on the described work which were used to assure proper execution of assigned tasks. The persons who would have processed the correspondence at issue and

If petitioner is alleging that the delay was caused by a misinterpretation of patent rules or simple forgetfulness, then delay was not unavoidable. A delay resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP does not constitute an “unavoidable” delay. See Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (N.D. Ind. 1987), Vincent v. Mossinghoff, 230 USPQ 621, 624 (D.D.C. 1985); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm’r Pat. 130, 131 (1891). Preoccupation with other matters which took precedence over the above-identified application does not constitute unavoidable delay. See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 USPQ 977, 982 (D.C. Cir. 1982).

Petitioner should consider filing a petition stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an “unintentionally” abandoned application without a showing that the delay in prosecution or in late payment of an issue fee was “unavoidable.” This amendment to 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) has been implemented in 37 CFR 1.137(b).

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By facsimile: (703) 308-6916
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Office of Petitions
2201 South Clark Place
Crystal Plaza 4, Suite 3C23
Arlington, VA 22202

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision should be directed to the undersigned at (703) 308-6712.



E. Shirene Willis
Senior Petitions Attorney
Office of Petitions

Enclosures: blank PTO/SB/64-- PETITION FOR REVIVAL OF AN APPLICATION
ABANDONED UNINTENTIONALLY UNDER 37 CFR 1.137(b)

Privacy Act Statement

cc: REGAN L. TRUMPER
AGILENT TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
815 SW 14TH STREET
LOVELAND CO 80537